(a) whether India would join Paris Convention on Intellectual Property Rights; and

(b) the advantage, India will get from the convention?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) The matter is under consideration of the Government.

Opening of Commercial offices in Pakistan

3552. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of commercial offices opened by the Government in Pakistan for promoting greater trade with that country;

(b) the number of personnel in these offices and their professional background; and

(c) whether there is any impediment placed by the Pakistan authorities in the smooth operation of these commercial offices?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) No separate commercial office has been opened by the Government of India in Pakistan. However, a Commercial Wing exists in the High Commission of India, Islamabad. This is headed by a Counsellor with consideration commercial experience in other Indian Missions earlier. He is assisted by a PA, assistant and LDC.

(c) The major impediment in the smooth functioning of the Commercial Wing is the reluctance of the Pakistani authorities to interact with the Commercial Wing and harassment by the Pakistani Intelligence agencies of the businessmen getting in touch with the Commercial Wing.

Projections by STC

3553. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether State Trading Corporation's projections for the current year has sharply come down;

(b) the total loss incurred by STC on fake import and export deals in the recent past years;

(c) the reasons therefore; and

(d) the remedial steps in details taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) No, Sir. During the current financial year, the total turnover of the State Trading Corporation of India Ltd. has been projected at the level of Rs. 3300 crores as compared to the achieved turnover of Rs. 2878 crores during 1997-98 which envisages an increases by 15%.

(b) The Corporation has intimated that it has not entered into any fake import and export deals. It has been earning net profits every year since its inception.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Export of Agricultural Products

3554. SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to boost export of certain agriculture products and farm goods;

(b) if so, the steps taken in this regard; and

(c) the target set up for exports of agriculture products this year?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) The policy of the government to permit exports of agricultural products and farm goods is governed principally by the

concerns of India's food security, maximising farm incomes and earning foreign exchange. Review of export performance of agricultural products is an on-going process and according policy interventions are made, as and when considered necessary, with a view to making agricultural exports increasingly viable.

(b) Some of the steps taken/proposed to be taken to enhance exports of agricultural products and farm goods include:—

1. Providing assistance for raising small and large nurseries for production of good quality planting material, upgradation of technical know how of farmers through demonstrations, trainings and publicity, rejuvenation of old orchards, area expansion, supply of minikits for vegetabled, improving productivity and training of farmers.

2. Provision of soft loans for setting up of grading/processing centres, auction platforms, ripening/curing chambers and quality testing equipment.

3. Providing financial assistance to exports/growers/Cooperative Societies for development of infrastructural facilities such as purchase of specialised transport units, establishment of pre-cooling/cold storage facilities, integrated post-harvest handling systems (pack houses).

4. Grant of financial assistance for improved packaging, strengthening of quality control.

5. Establishment of vapour heat treatment facilities for improving the acceptability of the product especially the mangoes in overseas markets.

6. Grant of Air Freight Subsidy for exports of selected fresh vegetables and fruits.

7. Arranging promotional campaigns such as buyer-seller meets and participation in important international fairs and exhibitions.

8. Setting up of integrated cargo handling and cold storage facilities at various International Airports for handling export of perishable items such as fresh fruits and vegetables.

9. Abolition of cess on export of pepper (except green pepper in brine), cardamom, saffron and spice oils and oleoresins to make them price competitive in the overseas markets, setting up of laboratories for testing of products to ensure quality, technology transfer, process upgradation and product development.

10. Providing assistance in development of data-base and dissemination of market information.

(c) Value of Export of Agriculturalf products excluding plantation products, is likely to attain a level of US $ 4 billion in 1998-99

IIFT Study on Informal Trade

3555. **DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA:** Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade conducted a study on the informal trade being carried out through International border with Myanmar, Bhutan, China and Bangladesh;

(b) if so, the findings in relation to modus operandi, sectorwise items and amount of transaction involved in each of the border points;

(c) the projected amount that would have come to the national revenue if formal border trade had taken place; and

(d) the details of steps taken by Government to promote border trade in the NER and to legalise these informal trades to prevent further loss of revenue?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEDGE): (a) No, Sir. However, they have conducted a study of Industrial Development and Export potential of the North-Eastern Region.

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